

# Hawks' Shift Precipitated Bombing Halt

By Stuart H. Loory  
Los Angeles Times

Eight prominent hawks and a dove—all from outside the government—gathered in the White House for a night and day last March to judge the progress of the Vietnam war for President Johnson.

Their deliberations produced this verdict for the chief executive:

Continued escalation of the war—intensified bombing of North Vietnam and increased American troop strength in the South—would do no good. Forget about seeking a battlefield solution to the problem and instead intensify efforts to seek a political solution at the negotiating table.

The manner in which Mr. Johnson sought the advice of the nine men before arriving at the conclusion to de-escalate the war announced in his now famous March 31 speech, has been pieced together from conversations with reliable sources who asked to remain anonymous.

The nine men, Republicans and Democrats with extensive experience in formulating foreign policy, were among those frequently consulted by Mr. Johnson from time to time during the war. At each consultation prior to March they had been overwhelmingly in favor of prosecuting the war vigorously with more men and material, with intensified bombing of North Vietnam, with increased efforts to create a viable government in the South.

As recently as last December they had expressed this view to the President. The only dissenter among them—one who had been a dissenter from the beginning—was former Undersecretary of State George Ball.

## March 18th Meeting

The men, who have come to be known to a small circle in the government as the President's "senior informal advisory group" convened in the White House early on the evening of March 18th.

Present in addition to Ball were: Arthur Dean, a Republican New York lawyer who was a Korean War negotiator during the Eisenhower administration; Dean Acheson, former President Truman's Secretary of State; Gen. Matthew B. Ridgeway, the retired commander of United Nations troops in Korea; Gen. Maxwell Taylor, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Cyrus Vance, former Deputy Defense Secretary and a key troubleshooter for the Johnson Administration; McGeorge Bundy, Ford Foundation President who had been special assistant for National security affairs to Mr. Johnson and former President Kennedy; former Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon and Gen. Omar Bradley, a leading supporter of the President's war policies.

First the group met over dinner with Secretary of State Dean Rusk; Defense Secretary Clark M. Clifford; Ambassador W. Averell Harriman; Walt W. Rostow, the President's special assistant for National security affairs; Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Richard Helms, Director of

the Central Intelligence Agency; Paul Nitze, Deputy Defense Secretary; Nicholas Katzenbach, Assistant Secretary of State; and William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

The outsiders questioned the government officials carefully on the war, the pacification program and the condition of the South Vietnamese government after the Tet offensive. They included in their deliberations the effect of the war on the United States.

## Three Briefings

After dinner the government officials left and the group received three briefings.

Philip C. Habib, a deputy to William Bundy and now a member of the American negotiating team in Paris, delivered an unusually frank briefing on the conditions in Vietnam after the Tet offensive. He covered such matters as corruption in South Vietnam and the growing refugee problem.

Habib, according to reliable sources, told the group that the Saigon government was generally weaker than had been realized as a result of the Tet offensive. He related the situation, some said, with greater frankness than the group had previously heard.

In addition to Habib, Maj. Gen. William E. DePuy, special assistant to the Joint Chiefs for counterinsurgency and special activities, briefed the group on the military situation, and George Carver, a CIA analyst, gave his agency's estimates of conditions in the war zone.

The briefings by DePuy and Carver reflected what many understood as a dispute over enemy strength between the Defense Department and the CIA which has been previously reported. Discrepancies in the figures resulted from the fact that DePuy's estimates of enemy strength covered only identifiable military units, while Carver's included all known military, paramilitary and parttime enemy strength available.

## Striking Turnabout

The morning of March 19, the advisory group assembled in the White House to discuss what they had heard the previous evening and arrived at their verdict. It was a striking turnabout in attitude for all but Ball.

After their meeting, the group met the President for lunch. It was a social affair. No business was transacted. The meal finished, the advisers delivered their verdict to the President.

He was reportedly greatly surprised at their conclusions. When he asked them where they had obtained the facts on which the conclusions were based, the group told him of the briefings by Habib, DePuy and Carver.

Mr. Johnson knew that the three men had also briefed his governmental advisers, but he had not received the same picture of the war as Rostow presented the reports to him.

As a result of the discrepancy, the President ordered his own direct briefings. At least Habib and DePuy—and almost certainly Carver—had evening sessions with the President.

Habib was reportedly as frank with the President as he had been with the advisory group. The President asked tough questions. "Habib stuck to his guns," one source reported.

On top of all this, Clifford, since he had become Defense Secretary, came to the same conclusions Robert S. McNamara had reached—that the bombing of North Vietnam was not achieving its objectives.

Germany's emergency legislation, which provides for special executive authority in times of national emergency, was stoutly defended by Chancellor Kiesinger and Foreign Minister Willy Brandt.

Story on Page A3.

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*"I shall not resign a mandate from the people. I shall fulfill it. I shall change the premises of the republic will not change. The people will take on itself again. Independence and will triumph with"*

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By Donald R. Lusk  
Washington Post

By Walter Pincus  
Washington Post Staff Writer

PARIS, May 30—"I have these words, President de Gaulle, promising counterattack that he has built and presented. He pledged to stay on as crisis France has faced since this weekend.

He dissolved the National Assembly for next month, number of state conventions. He promised to free the grip of a national strike, working to stave off a quick victory at the National Convention.

He said France was menaced by a Communist takeover must mobilize to save itself.

He conferred emergency powers on local administration and appeared to give tin Maine and Vermont.

He ordered troops to stand duty on the outskirts of that Humphrey. Kennedy and capital.

He said France was menaced by a Communist takeover must mobilize to save itself.

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DELEGATES, A5, Col. 1

It was the de Gaulle of 1940 who spoke today, promising new "liberation." It was avengeful voice, pushing the country, some said, to the brink of civil war and offering it a single, blunt formula for salvation: "Follow me."

De Gaulle made it clear that on one point he was giving the country no choice. The strike of eight million workers and the revolt of half a million students must come to an end. Either the organization

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Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS, May 31 (Friday)-

French government today imposed currency-exchange controls to keep nervous citizens from shipping francs out of the country to sell for currencies.

The first word of the renewed controls came shortly before midnight last night. The government move was officially described as temporary and limited in scope.

Yesterday, the Bank for International Settlements in Switzerland said it had stopped buying up francs to support the currency's price. BIS acted on request of Banque de France, the country's central bank.

The word here was that the Federal Reserve Bank of New York would continue purchases, however.

The French government's position of exchange controls came after a day of talks about both this step and a possible devaluation of the franc.

The exchange controls were considered more likely, but swift government moves may have caught many people by surprise.

There was no available evidence here to suggest that the more drastic action of formally devaluing the franc was in the works. A number of economists

See MONEY, A18, Col. 1

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*I have made my decision. With de Gaulle mounted an uncompromising fight to defend the French Republic over for a decade. President to resolve the worst of the Algerian war. Assembly and called new kept his Premier. Country from the paralyzing force if necessary.*



Louchheim  
Foreign Service

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